

Black Bear Damage and Nuisance Complaints 2004

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Abstract

Wildlife Services (WS) personnel received 1,227 bear complaints during calendar year 2004, and trapped and translocated 592 bears. There were also 36 additional bears trapped in cooperation with a research project with the WDNR and UWSP. The majority of complaints were resolved over the phone with advice and recommendations from a nuisance wildlife specialist located at the Rhinelander and Waupun District Offices. Complaints requiring field investigation or trapping were dispatched to the field. Bears captured were translocated to an isolated area.

Methods

The U. S. Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services took over Wisconsin's bear damage/nuisance abatement work in 1990. WS specialists are located in Brule, Hayward, Rhinelander, Cumberland, Park Falls, Winter, and Florence and are supervised by Bob Willging (WS District Supervisor, Rhinelander District). WS Specialists supervised by Charles Lovell (WS District Supervisor, Waupun) handled complaints that occurred in the WS Southern District based in Waupun. Two full-time nuisance wildlife specialist handled complaints coming in on the Rhinelander and Waupun District's 800 number.

A nuisance bear was defined as any bear causing problems at bird feeders, garbage cans, dumpsters, and/or campgrounds. Damage bears were defined as bears causing problems to agricultural crops, beehives, livestock, or property (e.g. house siding). Every effort was made to handle bear damage/nuisance complaints over the phone with advice and recommendations. When necessary, the nuisance specialist dispatched calls to field personnel for further investigation and/or live-trapping and translocation.

Results

Calendar year 2004 marked the fourteenth year that WS has assisted WDNR with bear damage/nuisance abatement. Bear complaints in 2004 (1,227) were down 11% from 2003 (1,370), and 15% less than the record number of complaints (1,439) received in 1995. The majority of the complaints (81%) were nuisance complaints, 6% involved property damage, and 13% involved damage to agriculture. In addition to the 1,227 bear complaints received, there were 69 instances where WS provided technical assistance for bear damage to agriculture to 72 participants statewide in the WDACP counties administered by WS. This assistance included issuing temporary fencing and enrolling the farmer/grower in the WDACP program.

WS personnel live-trapped and translocated 592 bears during 2004 (Table 1). Almost half (48%) of the bears trapped and translocated were involved in agriculture damage situations, although these accounted for only 13% of the total complaints. As in previous years, bears seemed to congregate at certain corn fields requiring the removal of several bears from a single field in order to reduce damage.

A total of 287 bears were trapped and moved from nuisance situations, and 29 from property damage complaint situations. Bear traps were set in 26% of nuisance complaint situations,

while 74% were handled with advice and recommendations. The 800# phone system for handling complaints again proved invaluable as nearly all of the nuisance complaints came in on the toll-free lines.

Four Agricultural Damage Bear Permits were issued in 2004. Five bears were killed under these permits, all in Langlade County. The agreement between the WDNR and WS for handling bears complaints continued to work extremely well.

Table 1. *Number of black bears trapped and translocated by county and type, 2004.*

County	Agriculture	Property	Nuisance	Total
Ashland	16	0	8	24
Barron	0	0	7	7
Bayfield	76	4	19	99
Brown	0	0	1	1
Burnett	12	0	7	19
Chippewa	0	0	1	1
Clark	4	1	1	6
Douglas	8	4	21	33
Door	0	0	1	1
Florence	43	4	14	61
Forest	0	0	5	5
Iron	1	0	11	12
Langlade	7	1	16	24
Lincoln	1	1	5	7
Marathon	2	0		3
Marinette	0	8	33	41
Marquette	0	0	1	1
Oconto	0	0	4	4
Oneida	3	1	9	13
Polk	0	0	1	1
Portage	0	0	1	1
Price	8	1	9	18
Rusk	3	2	13	18
Sawyer	74	0	71	145
Vilas	0	0	14	14
Washburn	18	1	13	32
Wood	0	1	0	1
Total	276	29	287	592